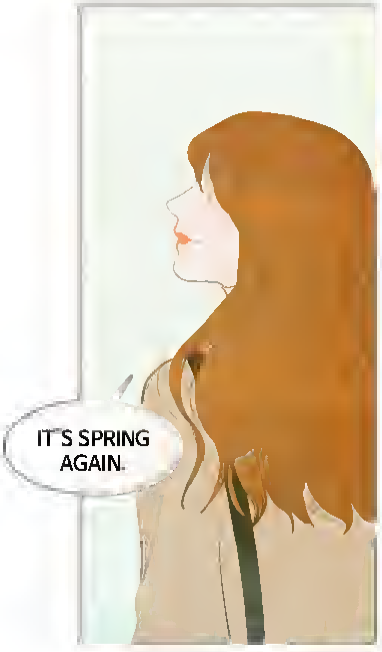
EVEN AFTER
WINTER LEFT

AND I WAS LEFT ON MY OWN,
TIME HAS CONTINUED TO PASS AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED.


IT'S SPRING AGAIN.

THERE WERE SO MANY THINGS THAT WE WANTED TO DO TOGETHER WHEN SPRING CAME...

Winter Woods

THE DAY THAT
WINTER LEFT,

SOME PEOPLE SENT
BY SARAH RAIDED MISTY
WOODS SQUARE.

AND
THEY TOOK HUBERT
AND LARRY AWAY.

BUT NOT LONG
AFTER THAT,

THEY WERE RELEASED UNDER THE CONDITION OF REMAINING SILENT FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES ABOUT THE UNETHICAL EXPERIMENTS THAT THEY PERFORMED AT THE LABORATORY.

THERE WERE PROBABLY SEVERAL OTHER TYPES OF SIMILAR EXPERIMENTS ASIDE FROM THOSE CONDUCTED ON WINTER.

ACCORDING TO HUBERT, SARAH SEEMED LIKE SHE'S GOING TO CONTINUE HER RESEARCH.

IT STILL DOESN'T LOOK LIKE SHE'S GOING TO GIVE UP...

I SEVERED
MY TIES WITH HER
AFTER THAT.

NEITHER SARAH NOR
I TRIED TO CONTACT
ONE ANOTHER.

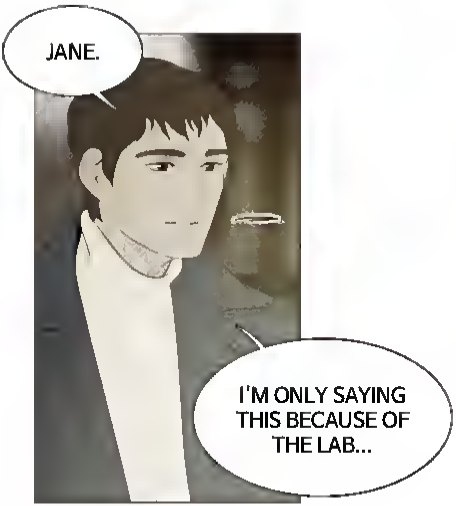
WE PROBABLY WON'T
SPEAK AGAIN IN
THE FUTURE, EITHER.

SMITH AND LARRY SAID THAT THEY WANTED TO START A SMALL FLOWER SHOP

SO THEY MOVED TO THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE CITY, TELLING ME TO COME AND VISIT THEM OFTEN,

AND HUBERT, AFTER SPENDING HIS ENTIRE LIFE ON RESEARCH,

SAID THAT HE DOESN'T KNOW WHAT HE WANTS TO DO AND RETURNED TO HIS HOMETOWN TO TAKE SOME TIME TO THINK ABOUT IT.


JANE.
I'M ONLY SAYING THIS BECAUSE OF THE LAB...

INSTEAD OF STAYING HERE, THERE'S ANOTHER PLACE THAT I'VE ARRANGED FOR YOU.
WHY DON'T YOU GO THERE?

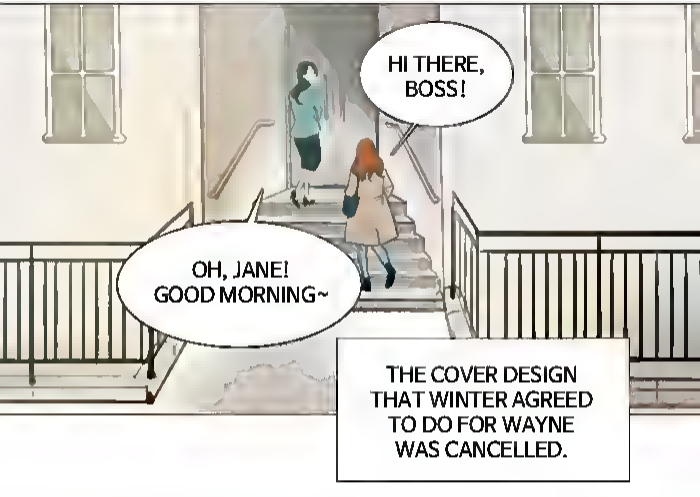
I WANT TO STAY HERE.
THIS PLACE HAS A LOT OF MEMORIES FOR ME.

I COULDN'T LEAVE THIS PLACE FILLED WITH MEMORIES OF WINTER.

IT MAY BE MEANINGLESS HOPE, BUT MAYBE WINTER WILL RETURN WHEN HE GETS HEALTHIER.

I WOULD LIKE TO GO BACK TO THE HOUSE WHERE I LIVED WITH MY GRANDMA LONG AGO,

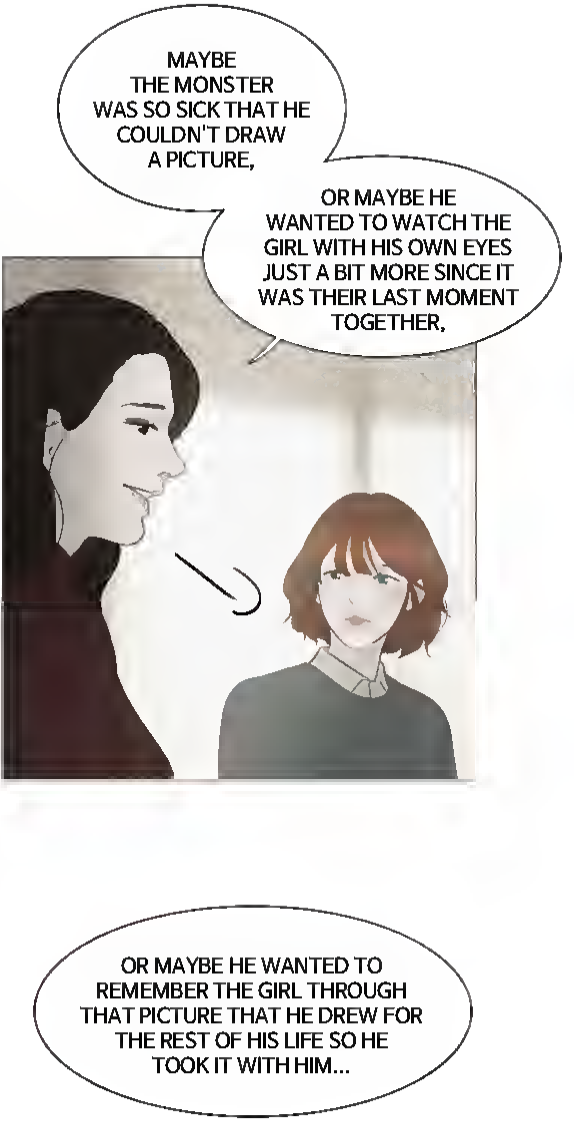
BUT
I NEED A LOT OF MONEY
TO GO BACK THERE.


HI THERE, BOSS!
OH, JANE! GOOD MORNING~
THE COVER DESIGN THAT WINTER AGREED TO DO FOR WAYNE WAS CANCELLED.

I WAS EXPECTING TO HAVE TO PAY A PENALTY AND LEAVE THE COMPANY FOR VIOLATING THE CONTRACT,

BUT THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF SAID SOMETHING SURPRISING

WAYNE SENT ME THE MANUSCRIPT THAT HE FINISHED LAST WEEK.
BUT JUST LIKE WINTER, THE MONSTER IN THE STORY DIDN'T LEAVE A DRAWING BEHIND.
...WHY?
I'M NOT SURE EITHER. THERE ISN'T A CLEAR REASON FOR IT EVEN IN THE NOVEL.


MAYBE THE MONSTER WAS SO SICK THAT HE COULDN'T DRAW A PICTURE,
OR MAYBE HE WANTED TO WATCH THE GIRL WITH HIS OWN EYES JUST A BIT MORE SINCE IT WAS THEIR LAST MOMENT TOGETHER,
OR MAYBE HE WANTED TO REMEMBER THE GIRL THROUGH THAT PICTURE THAT HE DREW FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE SO HE TOOK IT WITH HIM...

I SEE...

THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF CANCELLED THE CONTRACT WITHOUT ANY PENALTY FEE,

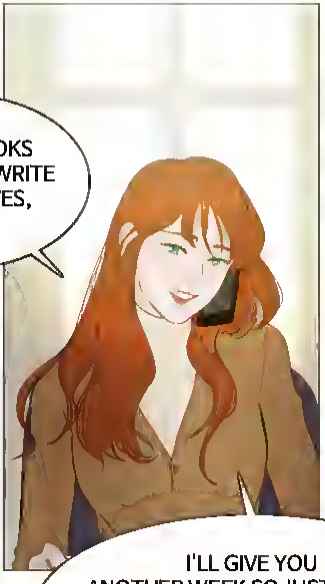
AND I WAS ABLE TO KEEP WORKING AT THE PUBLISHING COMPANY.

AND THE COVER OF WAYNE'S BOOK ENDED UP BEING A BLANK CANVAS WITHOUT ANYTHING DRAWN ON IT.

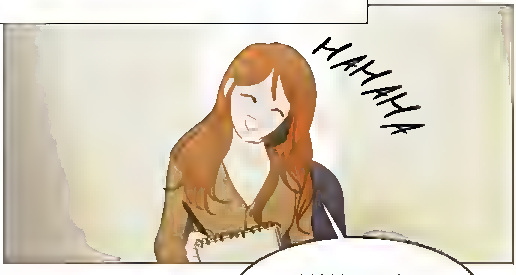
ULTIMATELY,
I GAVE UP ON BECOMING A WRITER.

BECAUSE I WANTED TO KEEP MY STORY WITH WINTER TO MYSELF,

AND I ENJOYED WORKING IN PUBLISHING MORE THAN I EXPECTED.

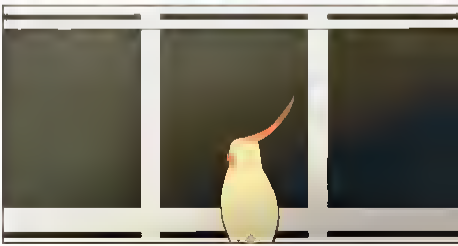

GREAT BOOKS DON'T JUST WRITE THEMSELVES, RIGHT?
I'LL GIVE YOU ANOTHER WEEK SO JUST FORGET ABOUT WRITING FOR NOW, GET LOTS OF REST AND THEN TRY TO FINISH UP LITTLE BY LITTLE.
OKAY?

PERHAPS BECAUSE OF MY OWN EXPERIENCES AS A STRUGGLING WRITER, MORE AND MORE AUTHORS WANTED ME AS A MANAGER.



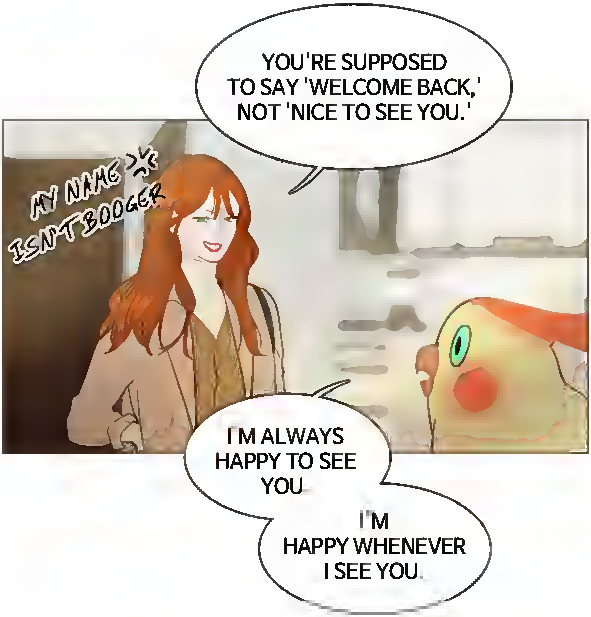
ROY~~~

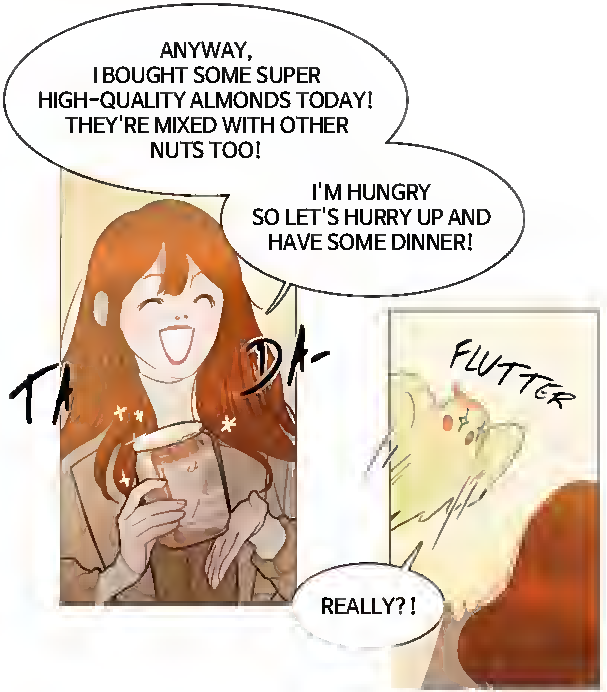
SMILE
I'M BACK!

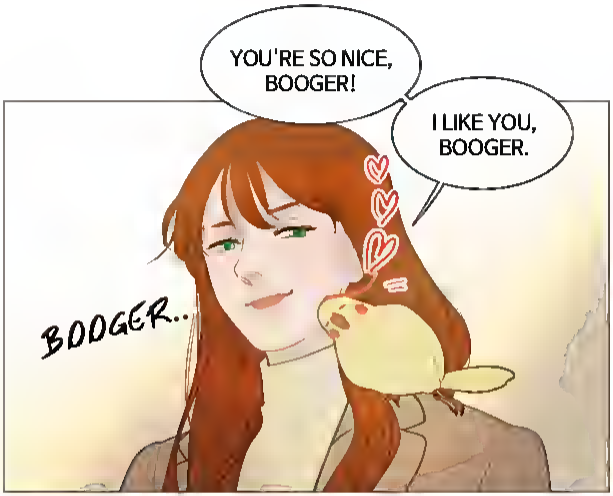


ROY APPEARED TO HAVE GONE BACK TO BEING A NORMAL PARROT,
BUT HE WAS AN EXTREMELY QUICK LEARNER.
ARE YOU BACK, BOOGER?

NICE TO SEE YOU~ BOOGER!
AND PERHAPS BECAUSE A MEMORY REMAINED IN HIS SUBCONSCIOUS, HE PREFERRED CALLING ME BOOGER THAN MY ACTUAL NAME


YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO SAY 'WELCOME BACK,' NOT 'NICE TO SEE YOU.'
MY NAME ISN'T BOOGER
I'M ALWAYS HAPPY TO SEE YOU.
I'M HAPPY WHENEVER I SEE YOU.


ANYWAY,
I BOUGHT SOME SUPER
HIGH-QUALITY ALMONDS TODAY!
THEY'RE MIXED WITH OTHER
NUTS TOO!
I'M HUNGRY
SO LET'S HURRY UP AND
HAVE SOME DINNER!
TH
DH-
FLUTTER
REALLY?!

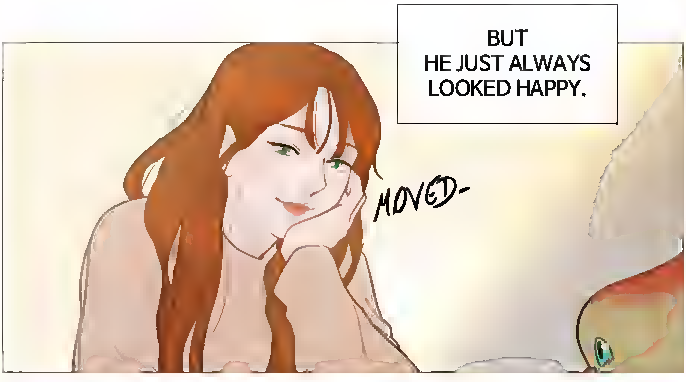


ROY SEEMED REALLY CHEERFUL.

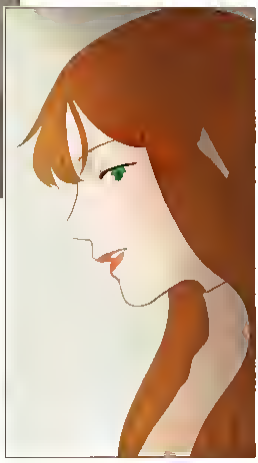
HE WASN'T AFRAID OF DEATH,

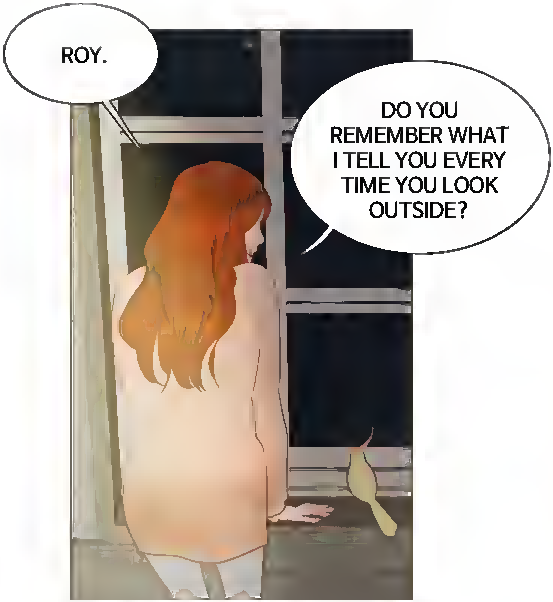
HE WASN'T SAD ABOUT BEING AN UNFINISHED EXPERIMENT,

AND HE WASN'T FRUSTRATED BY THE REALITY OF HAVING THE BODY OF A BIRD INSTEAD OF A PERSON.


BUT
HE JUST ALWAYS
LOOKED HAPPY.
MOVED-

WHEW~




ROY.
DO YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TELL YOU EVERY TIME YOU LOOK OUTSIDE?

IF I SEE A MAN
WHO'S TALL,
WITH BLACK HAIR
NO EYEBROWS,
AND LIGHT
BLUE EYES,

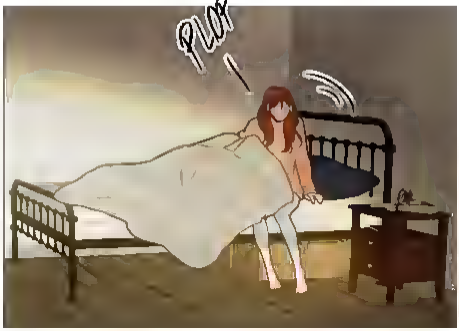
I'M SUPPOSED TO SHOUT 'WINTER!'
PAT
PAT
THAT'S RIGHT.

DID A MAN LIKE THAT WALK BY TODAY?
NO, NOT TODAY.

I JUST SAW KIDS WHO LOOK LIKE YOU PLAY AND SHOUT ALL DAY.
TSK TSK
IT WAS SO NOISY.

THAT'S ALL PART OF GROWING UP.
.....

AH~
I HAVE THE DAY OFF TOMORROW SO I HAD BETTER GET LOTS OF SLEEP.


PLOP

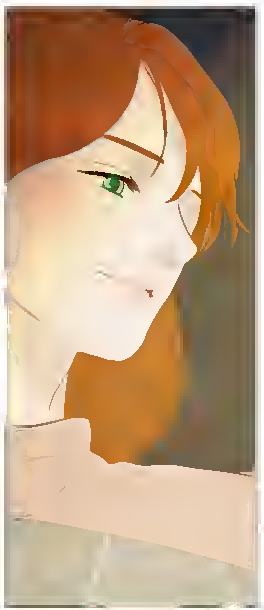
FLUTTER

SSK

YOU TOO.

ON THE DAY THAT WINTER LEFT,

I DIDN'T THINK THAT
I COULD SURVIVE IN A WORLD
WITHOUT WINTER.
BUT



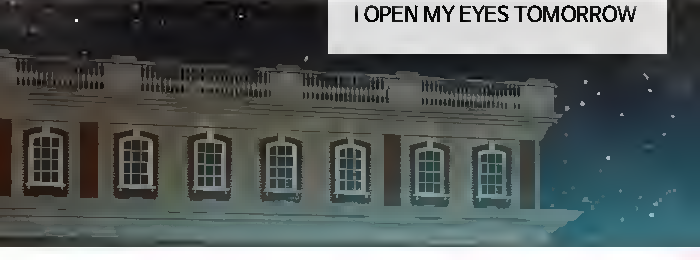
AT SOME POINT,
I WENT ON LIVING.

I'M GETTING
ALONG BETTER
THAN I THOUGHT.

I MISS YOU.

WINTER.

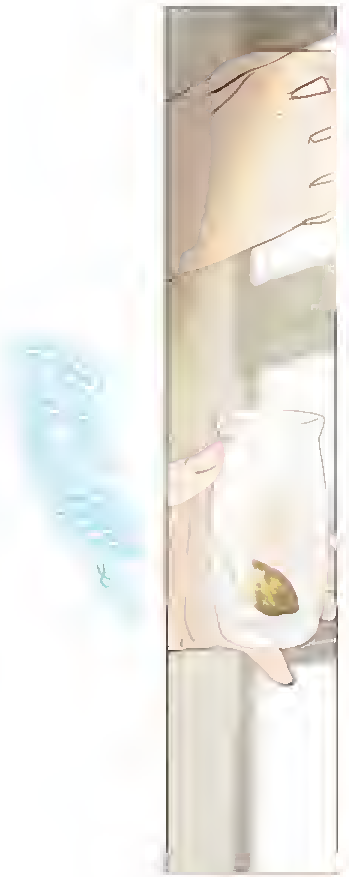
IT MAY JUST
SOUND LIKE A DREAM,
BUT I WISH THAT WHEN
I OPEN MY EYES TOMORROW

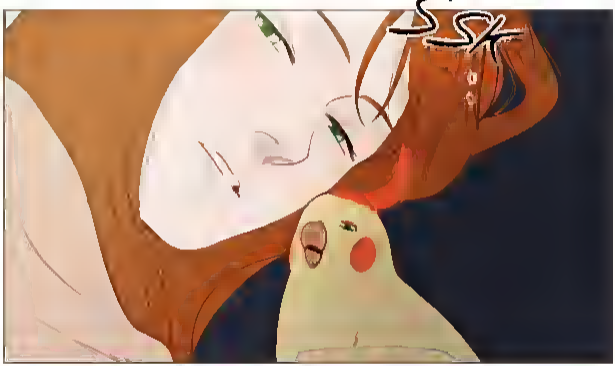


LIKE MAGIC,

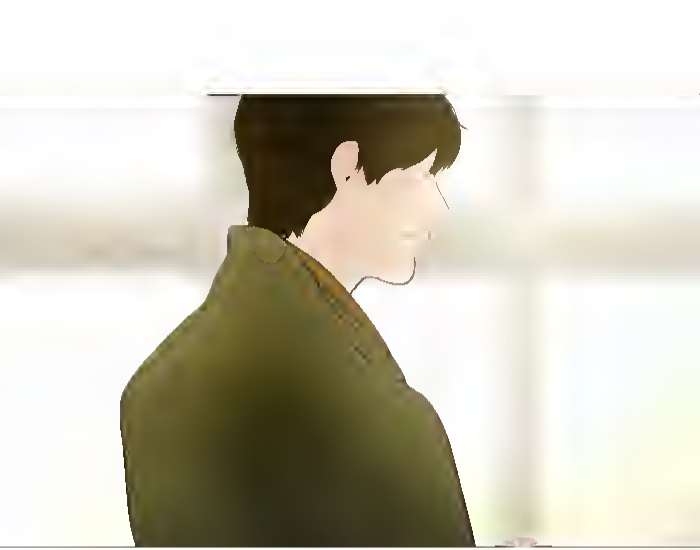
LIKE A MIRACLE,

YOU WOULD BE
IN FRONT OF ME.




SSK

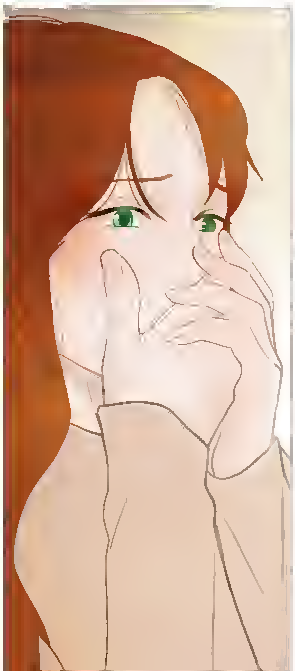
WINTER?

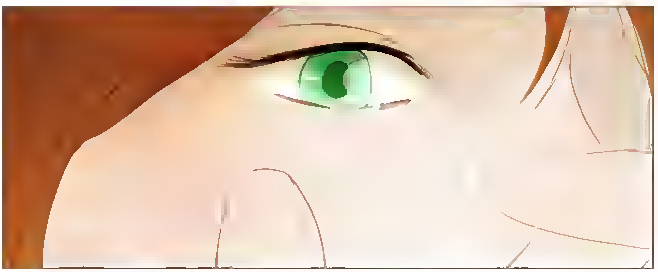


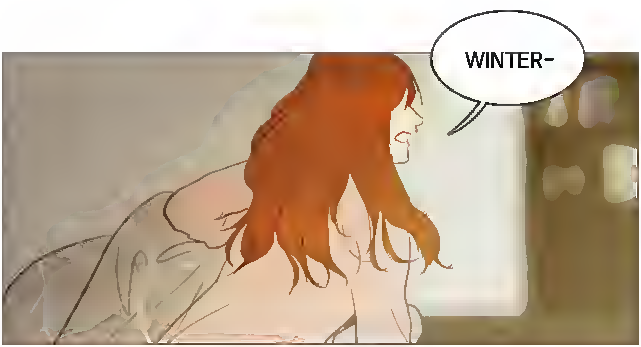
WINTER!
WINTER!

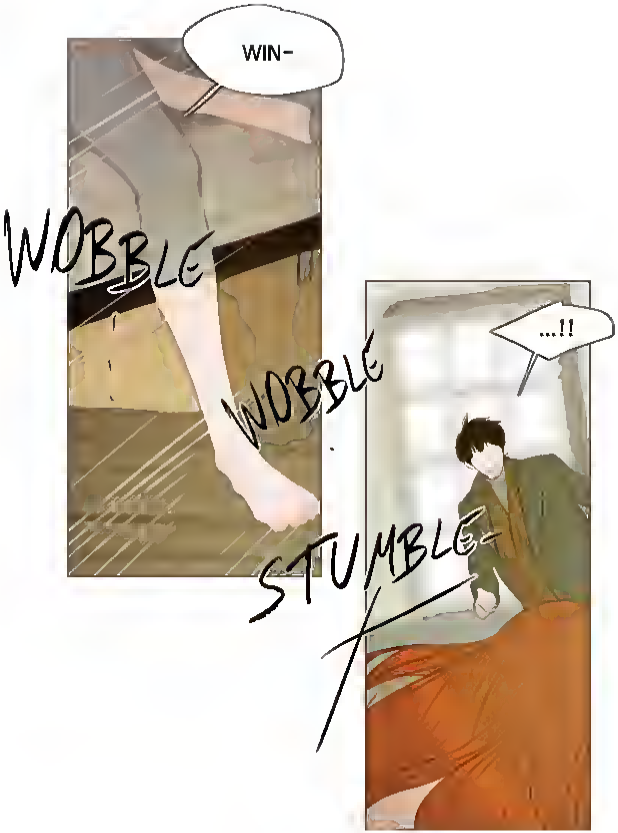
WIN...TER...

JANE.

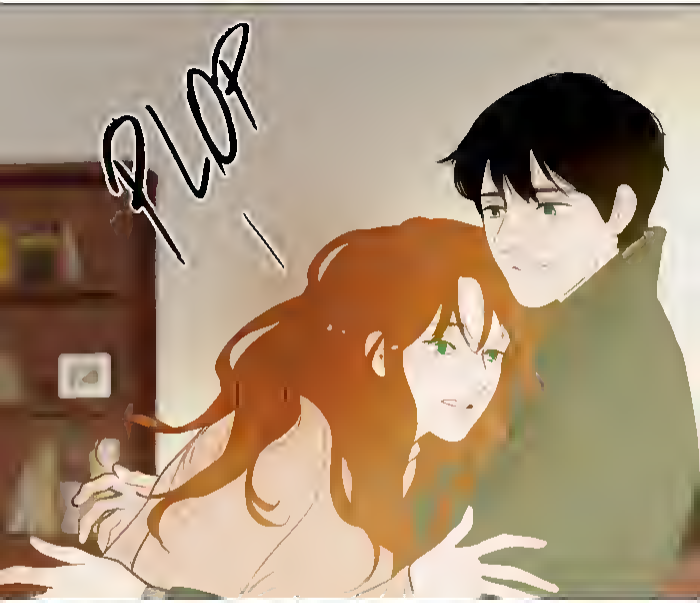


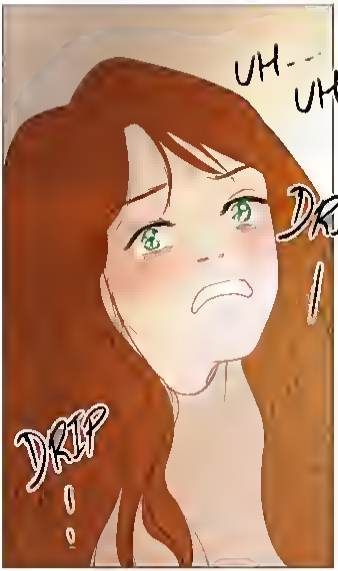



WINTER-


WIN-
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
STUMBLE-
...!!

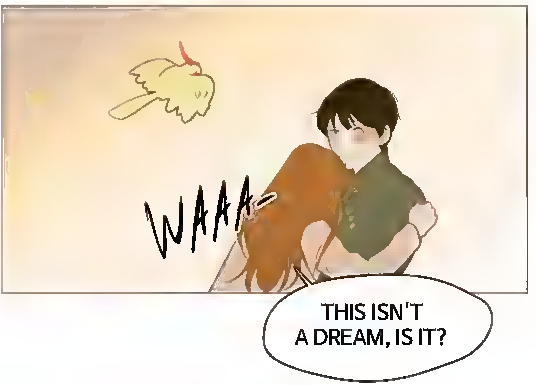
AGH!!!


PLOP


UH...
UH...
DRIP
!
DRIP
!
.

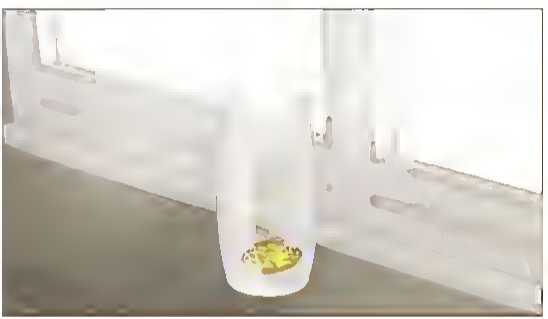
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'VE BEEN DOING WELL.
WITH ROY.

WIIIIN~~~
TEEEER~~~


WAAA~
THIS ISN'T A DREAM, IS IT?

WAIT...
ARE YOU REALLY WINTER? YOU HAVE EYEBROWS...
RUB
RUB
IT'S ME. WINTER. I STARTED GROWING EYEBROWS AT SOME POINT.
GASP...
YOU'VE GOTTEN SO HANDSOME...

I MISSED YOU.



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